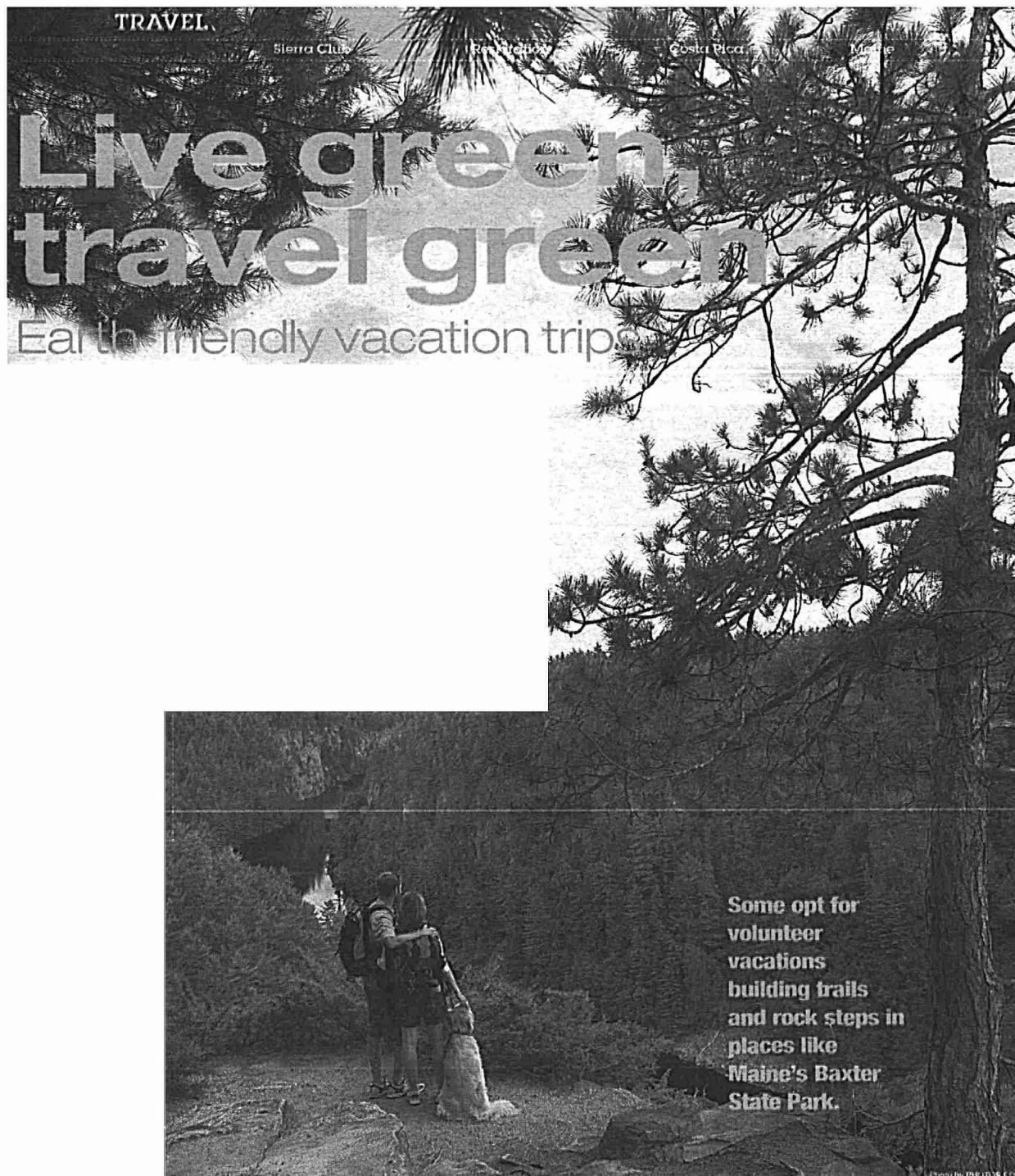


TRAVEL

Sierra Club Ramble House Costa Rica Maine

Live green, travel green

Earth-friendly vacation trips



Some opt for
volunteer
vacations
building trails
and rock steps in
places like
Maine's Baxter
State Park.

Photo by PHILIP S. CARR

By **LANE LAMBERT**
GateHouse News Service

You've gone green at home, from the organic food you buy at the supermarket to energy-efficient light bulbs. You even carpool to work when you can. Now you want to make your vacation time greener, too, with something more than just sightseeing. Boston and South Shore environmental groups offer a wide range of earth-friendly choices, from low-cost restoration work along the Appalachian Trail to high-priced ecology programs on the Amazon River.

"All sorts of people can do things like this," said Laura Hurley of the Appalachian Mountain Club. "You don't even need to have any previous experience."

The Boston-based AMC gets right to the point on its Web page for volunteer work: "Get out, get dirty, and give back!"

The Sierra Club also sponsors trips that include both manual labor and wildlife observation, many of them for as little as \$495. The Massachusetts Audubon Society's tours emphasize education rather than volunteer work, but travel director Karen O'Neill said the group encourages participants to donate items to local scientists and nature guides as a way to support wildlife preservation.

Mass Audubon's trips aren't cheap. Cathy and James Maher of Marshfield joined a 10-day birding excursion to Costa Rica for \$2,900 each, plus airfare, but Cathy Maher said it was well worth it "and definitely educational."

Appalachian Club programs range from "citizen science" air and climate observations to rigorous trail work and bog-bridge construction in such places as Baxter State Park in Maine and Crawford Notch in New Hampshire.

Chris McNeil of Brockton has been on a pair of weeklong "volunteer vacations" with groups building trails and rock steps in Baxter State Park. The 55-year-old aircraft mechanic slept in a tent at a base camp, hiking work sites from the trail head, where a park van dropped them off each day. Meals were provided.

"It was very rewarding," McNeil said — and only cost \$155.

■ Lane Lambert may be reached at llambert@ledger.com.

Vacationing green

\$3,995 plus airfare Two-week bird-watching trip to Peru with registered voters with Massachusetts

Audubon Society.

\$2,900 plus airfare 10-day bird-watching trip to Costa Rica with Massachusetts Audubon Society.

\$495 plus airfare Sierra Club trip to Santa Catalina,

Calif., to replant native flora and rebuild trails destroyed by wildfires last year.

\$155 Week of trail building at Baxter State Park in Maine.

~~Sources: Sierra Club, Mass. Audubon, Appalachian Mountain Club.~~

Earth-friendly vacations

Appalachian Mountain Club

■ Call 617-523-0655 or go to www.outdoors.org/volunteer.

Massachusetts Audubon Society

■ Call 800-289-9504 or go to www.massaudubon.org.

Sierra Club

■ Call 617-423-5775 or go to www.sierraclub.org/outings.



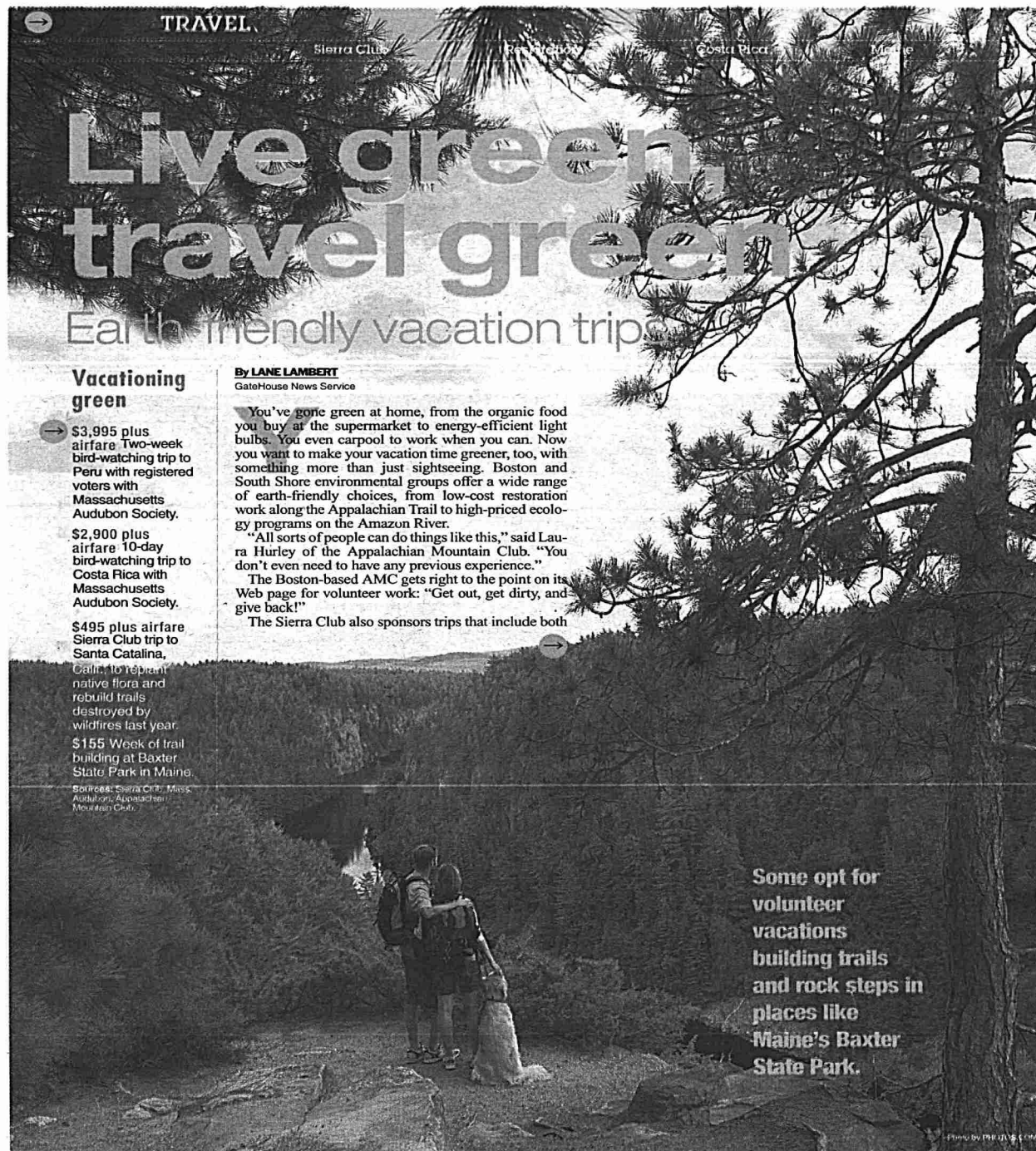


—Photo courtesy of RICHARD JOHNSON



—Photo courtesy of CATHY MAHER

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Photo by PHILIP L. COLE

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